(b) whether Government are planning to recognize this new regime in Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Resolution 1546 which was passed unanimously by the UN Security Council on 8th June, 2004 has endorsed the Interim Government of Iraq as a sovereign body, and recognizes Iraqi peoples' right to freely determine their own political future and to exercise full authority and control over their financial and natural resources.

(b) In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1546, Interim Iraqi Government is the recognized Government of Iraq.

Terrorist attack In Saudi Arabia

†425. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the terrorists belonging to Al-Qaida and other terrorists outfits stormed a hotel in Saudi Arabia in the last week of May and took hostage several people and killed dozens of them with their firearms;

(b) the details of terrorist outfit which took responsibility of this attack and the number of persons of Indian origin killed in the attack; and

(c) the initiative being taken by Government to protect the persons of Indian origin working in Gulf countries particularly in Saudi Arabia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) On 29 May, 2004, terrorists identified as belonging to Al-Qaida attacked the office of Arab Petroleum Investment Corporation in Al Khobar which was followed by hostage taking in the nearby Oasis Housing Complex. Eight Indians were killed in the incident.

(c) The Government is closely monitoring the security situation in the Gulf countries with particular attention being paid to developments that may have a bearing on security and well being of Indians working there. Our Missions in Gulf countries are in constant contact with concerned local authorities for the safety and security of the Indian community in their jurisdiction. The Missions are in regular contact with Indian communities in their respective countries to render all possible

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

assistance in this regard. Our Ambassador in Saudi Arabia met the Governor of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia where Al Khobar is located and received assurances of cooperation with regard to safety of Indian nationals. Further more Indians are not targeted so far in any Arab country.

H-1B visa cap imposed by U.S.

426. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of H-1B visa cap imposed by US for IT companies;

(b) whether after the end of the period of H-1B visa, pending applications for Green Card, H-1B visa holder would allowed to stay in US and work;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the number of software professional who has entered USA on H-1B visas during the last three years, year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) The Government of U.S.A. has imposed a cap of 65,000 jobs for IT companies. 50,000 visas have been granted and would join after 1 October, 2004. Remaining 15,000 visas are in process.

(b) and (c) H-1B visa holders would be allowed to stay in U.S.A. only if their labour certification application is approved by the State or labour certification was filed one year prior to expiry of H-1B visa. In late cases extension will be granted for one year each time until labour department finally clears the application.

(d) In 2001, 2002 and 2003 approximately 2,50,000 Indian IT professionals entered in U.S.A. The year-wise break up is not available with the Government of India.

Talks with Pakistan on massacre in Kashmir

427. SHRI LEKHRAJ BACHANI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have raised the question of massacres of innocent persons near line of control in Kashmir in recent talks with External Affairs Minister of Pakistan; and